

Transit-Oriented Development

Focus Groups among Recent Movers and those Planning to Move

Focus Group Report

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Prepared for

**The Metropolitan Transportation Commission
and Cambridge Systematics**

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It should be kept in mind that this type of qualitative inquiry permits directional rather than statistical analysis. Findings are confidential and any external dissemination or the promotional use of this information must be cleared in advance through CC&G, Cambridge Systematics, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Three focus groups were conducted to elicit qualitative insights from Bay Area residents about the moving/home selection process. All participants had either recently moved or were planning to move. Some of the specific topics discussed during the groups included:

- Housing in the Bay Area
- The process involved in making the decision to move
- The search for a new home
- Key factors in choosing where to move
- Relative importance of various factors, such as schools, amenities, safety, and price
- The reaction to a description of Transit-Oriented Development
- Tradeoffs when searching for a home – what priorities would be minimized or eliminated in favor of others

In addition to these reactions, emphasis was placed on learning the language and terminology participants used to describe the factors and features most important to them when looking for a home.

Scope of Work

All three groups were comprised of a mix of those who had moved within the past three years and those who were planning to move in the next year. These groups contained a mix of homeowners and renters, from various cities throughout the Bay Area.

The groups were conducted at Corey, Canapary & Galanis' (CC&G's) offices in San Francisco and lasted a full two hours each. Jon Canapary from Corey, Canapary & Galanis served as moderator and project director. Group 1 was held November 8, 2007; Group 2, on November 13, 2007; and Group 3 was held on January 29, 2008. Each group had 10 or more participants.

Please see the Appendix of this report for more specific information on the composition of groups and for examples of the forms and materials used on this project.

DETAILED OBSERVATIONS

Housing in the Bay Area

Most participants felt that housing options in the Bay Area were about the same or worse than several years ago, with Group 1 and Group 3 both being somewhat more negative than Group 2.

Are housing options in the Bay Area getting better, staying about the same, or getting worse than it was a couple of years ago?

	Better	Same	Worse	Don't Know
Group 1 (Show of Hands):	0	6	4	0
Group 2 (Show of Hands):	5	2	3	1
Group 3 (Show of Hands):	1	4	4	2*

*Participants came late

All three groups cited far more negatives than positives, including expense, a lack of options, and relatively small home sizes. Even Group 2, in which half the group said housing options were better than a few years ago, largely mentioned negatives when asked about housing in the Bay Area.

When asked specifically for positives, all three groups talked about the natural views (particularly being by the Bay and the Pacific Ocean) and the opportunities the Bay Area offers.

Group 3 mentioned transit as both a negative and a positive. While some group members said transportation was “easy,” other group members said transit was not as good as other cities of San Francisco’s class, such as Tokyo or New York. One member cited the difficulty of getting to BART or Caltrain in San Jose.

Decision to Move

The decision to move often came down to one of three major motivators:

A. Life Stage Change – Major life events prompt the decision to move. The most common life stage events involved children – and included having children, children reaching school age, and children growing up and leaving home. For those without children, a career-related change, such as a new job or retirement, often prompted a move.

From Group 1:

“[It was] Lifestyle. I was tired of taking care of the garden and my son had grown.”

“For us, it was the opposite lifestyle. We have small children and wanted open space.”

“[It was] More of a career thing . . .”

From Group 2:

“[It was a] place to raise kids.”

“[We] have to find a bigger space – our family has grown.”

“Had to move for job.”

From Group 3:

“School districts”

“[It was] where the job is.”

B. Desire for Different Circumstances – One or more features of the current living situation is not working as it should, and these features cause enough discomfort to prompt a move. Common circumstances cited included not enough space, living too far away from work, wanting to own vs. paying rent, and difficult landlords.

From Group 1:

“The decisive factor was when the owner sent in gardeners to tear out the back yard entirely.”

“My boyfriend and I sat down and said, ‘This place is too small.’”

From Group 2:

“[I want to be] closer to work.”

“[We] wanted more space for the money.”

From Group 3:

“[We had] landlord issues.”

“[I wanted to] buy a house.”

C. Financial – While it was cited as a reason to move, more often than not, financial considerations often framed the decision to move, rather than being a factor in itself. Financial considerations often helped participants decide whether to rent or buy, usually pretty early in the search process. Financial considerations also prompted participants to consider or exclude particular cities/areas.

From Group 1:

Renting vs. owning – “Rents are too high, so it’s better to own.”

“For the amount we’d have to pay on a mortgage, we could rent at half the price.”

From Group 2:

“[We] want to buy, not rent.”

“[We] still have to rent.”

From Group 3:

“[The] company gave us a budget for rent . . . [but we] just were pushing the company and got a higher provided rent.”

“Price – house vs. rental difference was minimal”

Participants indicated that it took anywhere from 1-18 months from the time a decision to move was reached until the move actually occurred, with the majority citing a 2-7 month time frame.

Search Experience/Sources

While all groups cited a variety of sources, renters in particular cited less formal sources, including Craigslist, friends/relatives, and just walking or driving around looking for places available in the desired neighborhood(s). Homeowners were more likely to engage a real estate agent, check MLS (multiple listing service) listings online, and visit open houses.

Key Factors in Choosing Where to Move (Unaided) and Specific Characteristics (Unaided)

While participants varied widely in terms of their location, life stage, age, and backgrounds, several key factors were frequently raised in all three groups. It should be noted, too, that while these common elements arose repeatedly, they often meant different things to different participants.

Commonly Recurring Factors

1. Finances/affordability.

- This was cited as a factor. However, it tended to be explained as the framework within which other priorities were placed. That is, the overall budget for a house or apartment was frequently on the upper end of what the household could afford.
- Some participants mentioned the idea of choosing a home well within their budget – e.g., “Not wanting to give up everything else just to be able to have the apartment” (Group 1). They were willing to forego some amenities, live in less space, or compromise on other factors in exchange for less financial pressure to make the housing payment.
- Conversely, participants expressed the idea that they did not want to have the “perfect” home if it meant giving up other important parts of their lifestyle or caused undue financial stress. Similarly, for some, a housing payment had to fit into their current budget and allow them to continue their current discretionary spending/leisure pursuits. A member of Group 3 said, “[I] have to be able to afford rent as well as [my] current lifestyle.” This was measured by their own assessment of finances, not those of a third party. Explained one Group 2 participant: “The bank says we have a [financial] cushion, but we’re at the top [of what we can afford].”

2. Safety.

- Participants often cited their comfort walking around the neighborhood, and they also frequently tied safety into the appearance of the neighborhood as well, such as this participant who stated the reason a specific neighborhood was important: “Feeling safe when we walk outside – being clean and quiet.” (See Michelle, Group 1, in table of responses to Self-Administered Questionnaire #1).
- The appearance of the neighborhood played a key factor in participants’ overall feeling of safety – and this seemed more important than crime-related data (which was mentioned by only one participant). One Group 2 participant explained: “When an area is clean, someone cares, they patrol it, they watch it – so people aren’t doing things they shouldn’t because someone is watching.”
- Most participants had a very concrete definition of ‘safety’ – that is, a safe area allowed them to do specific things and a safe neighborhood displayed specific characteristics that were different from an unsafe neighborhood. Group 2 participants cited such things as “the kind of people out at night,” well-lit streets, and a security gate on the apartment building entrance. A Group 3 participant said the neighborhood had to be safe, “So I won’t worry so much when my child plays outside.”
- Group 3 participants did not always cite safety per se, but often alluded to it, discussing the need for a home in “a good neighborhood,” for example. In addition to stating that a safe/safer neighborhood was important, other words/phrases alluding to safety included clean/cleanliness, nicer area/neighborhood, more families, fewer young people/college students, etc.
- Personal safety was overwhelmingly brought up as a factor by women. When men mentioned safety, it was often out of concern for their children, spouses, or partners. Men also were more likely to mention safety as it pertained to their possessions, e.g. the door to the home remaining unlocked but all of the household items were still there, or having a safe place for tools.

- Safety did not necessarily mean a complete lack of crime. Participants acknowledged that things like break-ins might happen even in relatively safe neighborhoods. One participant said it was OK that things like break-ins happened, because everyone knew local kids were involved, while another said she didn't mind drug dealers who were "older" and therefore less likely to have "something to prove."
3. **Walkability and Transit Options:** Tied to the priority on safety was the common desire to use a car less frequently, if not do away with one altogether.
 - Safety was something that allowed participants to consider using transit more frequently, even late at night, or walking to shops and restaurants instead of driving, and to feel comfortable doing so. In fact, the phrase 'feeling comfortable' or 'being comfortable' was frequently used by female participants to describe the priority of safety – e.g. feeling comfortable coming home late at night, feeling comfortable walking my dog, being comfortable walking by myself. This sense of comfort was more important to participants than statistics or whether crimes occurred in the immediate area.
 - In Group 1 and Group 2, this desire for minimal car use covered all aspects of a person's day, from wanting a shorter commute to being able to walk to the grocery store, dry cleaners, restaurants, entertainment, etc. Participants were somewhat concerned about the shops close by being too impractical or expensive, and wanted to be sure they fit with everyday needs. "Mill Valley has a great downtown, but nothing's affordable," explained one participant.
 - There was a strong emphasis placed on having amenities close by that participants use regularly – including grocery stores, dry cleaners, gyms, restaurants – and little desire for department stores or other types of shopping.
 - Although transit options were considered highly desirable, CitiCar, CarShare, and similar programs were mentioned (by one person in Group 1 and two people in Group 2) as a service that would further enable participants to reduce or eliminate household vehicles.
 - As part of the walkability/transit discussion, Group 1 and Group 2 participants often made a distinction between extremely high-density areas and walkable, yet more open, areas. Explained one Group 2 participant: "[We wanted a place where] people aren't passing through to get to somewhere else." (As examples, she gave Fillmore Street in San Francisco, which to her was too busy, but Potrero Hill, which was not too busy, was ideal.)
 - Group 3 participants were more car-oriented than Group 1 and Group 2. However, even in this group, 8 of the participants cited proximity to amenities and/or a shorter commute as key factors; of these 8 participants, 4 specifically mentioned BART, bus, or other public transit as key factors.
 4. **Schools.** For parents, good schools were an important, if not *the* overriding, factor. Parents cited districts with high test scores, as well as locations which would provide good schools for the grades their children were currently in (e.g. good elementary schools if they had younger children, good high schools if their children were older). Explained one parent: "I want schools – that's basically it; we paid a lot for a not as nice house because of the school and percentage of kids going off to college for the district, the school's programs (e.g. Spanish speaking programs) . . ." Those who were not parents would sometimes rate schools highly as well, either because of a good school's impact on property values or because they anticipated becoming parents in the near future.
 5. **Staying in Favorable, Familiar Neighborhood.** Several participants noted that their current/previous home was in a neighborhood they wanted to stay in, as many favorable features already existed there – so their move was more about looking for a larger/more suitable space in the same area. From Group 1: "We wanted to stay in the Berkeley area because we're used to certain stores, I've been with Berkeley YMCA for 5 years, and I didn't want to have to transfer to a new gym; [we] liked [our] neighborhood and wanted to stay in that area." A Group 2 participant said: "[The next important factor

was] neighborhood, one we already lived in; we'd already lived in 2 separate apartments there, it was the sunniest. We really like it, there are friends there, a nice balance of shops, and it's not too busy (not a Fillmore Street) but it does have amenities (Potrero Hill)." A participant from Group 3 said, "We want to stay in the East Bay as we have grown to like the area."

Less Common, But Notable, Factors:

6. **Environmental Concerns.** These were rarely mentioned by participants in Self-Administered Questionnaire #1. In the questionnaire, and the ensuing discussion, most participants who did focus on environmental concerns emphasized the impact on their own personal well-being – e.g. concerns over their children inhaling smog, diesel exhaust fumes from buses, or the likelihood of mold in their current home.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #1 -- Most Important Factors in Choosing a Home/Apartment			
Participant	Recent Mover/ Planning to Move	Most Important Factors	Why?
Shiva (Group 1)	Recent Mover	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clear model of how family life would work/relying on neighbors b. Schools/safety c. Nature/pollution/weather/health 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. There are so many options in the City [SF] that unless you have guidance, it's not really clear how to navigate family life vs. the simple solution of moving to a new suburb/closer-knit community. b. Aggressive competition for "top" schools and anxiety about how to navigate the process, especially when better-equipped people seem just as anxious and the thought that going through this process means buying into an elitist, segregated model vs. a public school system that is excellent but admits whoever rents OR owns there. c. The idea of home as haven, without a lot of air pollution around (wiping smog off my kids' faces). We were always sick here [SF].
Tony (Group 1)	Recent Mover	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Location b. Single family home with a big kitchen c. Great storage space for tools and materials 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Two blocks from Ashby BART – my girlfriend uses it daily; close to Berkeley, where we used to live. b. Larger than our old place, more quiet and peaceful. c. I need this for my remodeling business.
Andy (Group 1)	Recent Mover	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Convenience b. Price c. Neighborhood/atmosphere 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. No car; don't want to buy a car. b. Rent is expensive, and I have a budget. c. Don't want to deal with too many people, but still want a grocery store, restaurants, cafes, within walk[ing distance].
Nikki (Group 1)	Recent Mover	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allows pets b. Price c. Location 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. We have 2 cats and a small dog that we would never leave behind. b. Need rent below \$1,500 to be able to afford it. c. A safe neighborhood a girl could walk around [in]; in San Francisco proper, i.e. the heart of SF or in Potrero Hill.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #1 -- Most Important Factors in Choosing a Home/Apartment			
Participant	Recent Mover/ Planning to Move	Most Important Factors	Why?
Michelle (Group 1)	Recent Mover	a. Neighborhood b. Proximity to amenities c. Close to activities	a. Feeling safe when we walk outside – being clean and quiet. b. Restaurants, shops, dry cleaners, etc. – want to be able to walk there. c. Easy commute/walk to work, gym, other commitments.
Liliana (Group 1)	Recent Mover	a. Area/ location/ price b. Weather c. Close to friends, somebody I know ALSO More Comfortable	a. Secure, safe for kids, family b. Sunnier, less dampness c. For support group ALSO Washer, dryer inside apartment
Leamurl (Group 1)	Planning to Move	a. Location b. [none] c. Price	a. BART, bus, train b. [none] c. In price range
Cynthia (Group 1)	Recent Mover	a. Location b. Home that hadn't been Ellis-acted or have to evict c. Structural stability ALSO [see list]	a. Close to friends, fun, health food co-op in the Mission b. Opposed to evicting renters c. Don't want to lose home in earthquake or pay \$100,000s to fix foundation ALSO, of course, price, layout, backyard, bathtub . . . parking, light
Martha (Group 1)	Recent Mover	a. Cost b. Location c. Size	a. Not from the area, unsure of budget and what total cost of living would be b. My job is in the City, husband's in Palo Alto. Needed reasonable commute for both. c. We have a lot of stuff.
Martha (Group 1)	Planning to Move	a. Location b. Cost c. Size	a. Choosing an area where we can abandon having cars. b. On a tight budget, and it is ridiculous to afford to live here – want to get what you are paying for. c. Willing to downsize, but still want good space.
George (Group 1)	Planning to Move	a. Location b. Rent c. Decent Owner/ Landlord	a. The place now is shady – need more sun. b. Prices are now much higher than 10 years ago. c. Had too many problems with current one!
Dave (Group 1)	Planning to Move	a. Price b. Location c. Close to public transportation	a. What I can afford. b. Centrally located, close to family, friends, and work. c. Easy access to San Francisco.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #1 -- Most Important Factors in Choosing a Home/Apartment			
Participant	Recent Mover/ Planning to Move	Most Important Factors	Why?
Lakeisha (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Low crime rate/ safety b. Price c. Proximity to work	a. I wanted to make sure that I felt safe when I was home alone. b. I had to make sure that the price met my, as well as my roommate's, budget. c. I did not want a long commute, and gas is expensive.
Stacey (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. We wanted a TIC with my brother and his wife b. A place that we could fit our family/expand c. Neighborhood	a. Close to family – the only way we could afford our neighborhood. b. First child on the way and hopes to have more – didn't want a condo that we would not be able to enlarge. c. We loved our neighborhood and wanted to stay close to downtown and close to everyone's job (Genentech – South San Francisco).
Arturo (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Schools, church b. Clean neighborhood and good community c. What we could afford	a. Education, religion b. Somewhere to raise a family c. Price
Matthew (Group 2)	Planning to Move	a. More space b. Price c. Location (in SF)	a. Have a 10-month old who will require more space. b. What we can afford. c. Would like to remain in central part of city (close to public transit).
Gordon (Group 2)	Planning to Move	a. Quality of life b. Affordability c. Detached cottage/ rental potential	a. Having access to outdoor activity (beach, parks, hiking/biking, trails, etc.) b. I don't want to be a 'slave' to the mortgage c. Related to above: Creative possibility to rent a portion to reduce mortgage.
William (Group 2)	Planning to Move	a. Closer to work b. School district c. Affordability	a. Currently commute 1 hour and 20 minutes each way. b. [I have a] 6 year old and 15 month old c. Limited funds, do not want wife to have to find a job
Tiffany (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Location b. Parking c. Not a studio	a. Visited the City [SF] before and I knew I wanted to live in the Marina. My friends moved there as well. b. Needed at least street parking for my car. c. I don't like studios; wanted an actual bedroom.
Takita (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Appearance/ condition of home b. Size of home/lot c. Location	a. We didn't want any surprises or to have to put a lot of \$\$ into improvements. b. We needed at least 3 bedrooms and a back yard was important. c. We wanted an area that wasn't too suburban and was safe, quiet, scenic, diverse, close to transportation.
Megan (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Allowed dogs b. Clean/updated c. Safe area	a. [nothing] b. I wanted a nice place so I could have people over. c. I have to walk my dog.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #1 -- Most Important Factors in Choosing a Home/Apartment			
Participant	Recent Mover/ Planning to Move	Most Important Factors	Why?
Megan (Group 2)	Planning to Move	a. Allows dogs b. Low rent c. Close to work	a. [nothing] b. I am paying too much, and it's hard to live from paycheck to paycheck. c. Gas is too \$\$\$\$\$. I need to live within 5-10 minutes to work.
Amy (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Schools b. Atmosphere c. Environment	a. Kids to fit in, be #1, parents involved b. Educated parents, many children in neighborhood who want to be involved. c. Activities focused on kids, percentage of kids going to college.
June (Group 2)	Recent Mover	a. Location b. Price c. Proximity to SF	a. Must have good high school district. b. Must be able to afford it. c. I work in the City.
Chevon (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Rent/Space b. Safe area c. Close to BART/Freeways/Bridges	a. To fit into my budget and [so] I'm comfortable. b. So I won't worry so much when my child plays outside. c. Easy to get to with or without a car.
Stacey (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Location b. Nice neighborhood c. Home for 4 (family)	a. Needed to be close to husband's job in north San Jose. b. Craigslist can be deceiving, home looks beautiful online, neighborhood was not nice and still \$\$\$. c. We needed [a home] large enough for family, guests, and belongings.
Robert (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Price b. Location c. Safety	a. I needed to be able to afford it. b. I needed to be near a good bus line. c. Needed a safe neighborhood.
Robert (Group 3)	Planning to Move	a. Space b. Location c. Price	a. I live in a studio with my partner and need more space. b. I want to be closer to businesses and public transport. c. I need to be able to afford it.
Adam (Group 3)	Planning to Move	a. Location b. Price c. Parking	a. Gas prices, proximity to night life, work, and friends. I like space and am used to driving. b. You have to make three times rent for some. Everything else is expensive. c. Safety for stuff.
Kyion (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Cost b. Location c. Space	a. Have to be able to afford rent as well as current lifestyle. b. Has to be close to my job and my roommate's job. I work in San Francisco, and she works in Hayward. c. Me and my roommate need space. We are used to bigger rooms, etc.
Kyion (Group 3)	Planning to Move	a. Location b. Cost c. Space	a. We want to stay in the East Bay as we have grown to like the areas. b. We want to make sure we can afford our lifestyle. c. We need more space.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #1 -- Most Important Factors in Choosing a Home/Apartment			
Participant	Recent Mover/ Planning to Move	Most Important Factors	Why?
Marlene (Group 3)	Planning to Move	a. Amount of space/room b. Location c. Rent	a. I have lived in a studio apartment for a long time and want a place big enough to entertain friends. b. My office is in Berkeley and I want as little commute time as possible. c. I can't afford to pay much more than my studio apartment, which may mean renting a room in a larger house.
Rosalie (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Location b. Style c. Built as a townhouse	a. Moved from Menlo Park to Mountain View. Knew that my money would go further the further south I moved. b. Lived in upstairs/downstairs apartment for 15 years. Wanted an upstairs/downstairs townhouse. c. I wanted to buy, but did not want to live in a converted apartment building.
Kelly (Group 3)	Planning to Move	a. Cost/Budget b. Clean, quiet c. Safety	a. Have to live within my means. b. Illustrates a good landlord. c. Do not want to worry about well-being and property.
Elta (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Single Family Home b. Good Neighborhood c. Price vs. Rent	a. No condos or flats. Didn't want to have to work things out with a lot of other people. b. Good neighborhood for the money I had to spare. c. I bought a great 2 bed/ 1 bath, 2 garage home and pay same as rent.
Tage (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Real estate values b. Proximity to BART c. Size of house	a. Buying a house was a big investment. b. Wanted easy point access to San Francisco and other places in the East Bay – Berkeley, Downtown Oakland. c. Wanted at least 3 bedrooms and garage.
Christina (Group 3)	Recent Mover	a. Affordability b. Location c. Can be enough room for me	a. If it was in my budget. b. Had to be in a good neighborhood. Close to stores, hospitals, transportation, freeway access. c. Need enough space.
Christina (Group 3)	Planning to Move	a. To be with my fiancé b. Finances c. Closer to work	a. Plan to get married. Want to live with him. b. It's cheaper to live together once we are married. c. Easier and closer to work.

Reaction to Listed Factors (Group #1 and Group #2)

Tables showing respondents' ratings of listed factors from Groups 1 and 2 are on the next two pages. (Because Group 3 rated a different set of listed factors, they are discussed separately.)

Overall, respondents' reaction to listed factors strongly reflected their top priorities from Self-Administered Questionnaire #1, with safety, schools, and walkability/transit options rated highly by all three groups. (It should be noted that schools, overall, generally rated very low. However, when the ratings for parents only were considered, schools as a factor rated at or near the top.)

During the ensuing discussion after Self-Administered Questionnaire #2, several key elements were also raised:

- Weather, a factor asked about in Group 2, rated highly among this group's participants. Group 1 participants, however, brought up the issue of weather frequently – usually referring to the desire for a home with lots of natural sunlight, or a lack of indoor dampness.
- Neighborhood Character – Rarely mentioned by participants in either group, this phrase was interpreted broadly. While some participants thought of the architecture or buildings, many participants thought of the people in the neighborhood as defining its character. Participants often thought of this as a combination of safety, appearance, and the personality of the people who live there.
- Neighbors I Can Relate To – Most group participants were clear that this meant having neighbors you could get along with, but not necessarily a lot of socializing. Many participants wanted neighbors on a similar schedule – for example, neighbors who would not be too noisy late in the evening or early in the morning. Others cited a desire for neighbors who are congenial, but not necessarily wanting to socialize. One Group 2 participant said, “I have nice neighbors, but I’m not looking for social community either.” Group 1 participants said, “On a personality level, I hope my neighbors are fairly mellow, but that’s it,” and “[I’d like to see] working professionals – they don’t have to look like me or be my same age, but have a similar schedule.”
- Having My Own Parking Space or Garage – Even though there was strong transit support, and a desire to walk to errands and/or work, most participants strongly felt the need for a parking space or garage. Said a Group 1 participant: “I have a neighborhood sticker decal, which is OK; but a garage would be really nice.” A Group 2 participant noted: “On-street parking is not certain.”
 - When Group 2 participants were asked if they would give up their cars for an easier commute, most indicated they would not. Said one participant, “We lived in New York and no one had a car, but we can’t do that here – you have to walk up and down hills to get to a bus stop and it doesn’t run often enough.” Another participant said, “No, Caltrain doesn’t leave often enough.” Several participants indicated they would compromise somewhat – such as giving up one car (out of two or three cars total), or settle for a parking space instead of a garage – if they could have a shorter commute.
 - A few participants (one in Group 1, two in Group 2) mentioned CitiCar/CarShare programs as amenities that would help them live a more walking-and-transit oriented lifestyle.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #2
Importance of Listed Factors - Groups 1 and 2 (Combined)

“Please rate each of the following on their importance to you in choosing where to move. “

Attributes in bold were described in the exact same way in both groups. Attributes in regular typeface were described somewhat differently in each group, with the group using that particular description in parentheses.

Attribute	Very Important					Not at all important		NA	Mean
	5	4	3	2	1	1			
Quality of schools (parents in group ONLY)	6	1	1	0	0	0		8	4.63
Home cost (owners) <u>or</u> apartment rent (renters)	14	7	1	0	0	0		0	4.59
Safety of the neighborhood	14	5	2	1	0	0		0	4.45
Ease of walking or biking around neighborhood	11	7	4	0	0	0		0	4.32
Having a short commute	10	7	4	1	0	0		0	4.18
Character of the neighborhood	8	9	4	0	1	1		0	4.05
Cleanliness of the neighborhood (Group 2)	2	7	2	0	0	0		0	4.00
Having a backyard (Group 1)	5	3	2	0	1	1		0	4.00
Having a predictable commute time	10	5	5	1	1	1		0	4.00
Living near friends (Group 1)	3	4	4	0	0	0		0	3.91
Avoiding traffic congestion	10	5	3	2	2	2		0	3.86
Weather (Group 2)	3	3	5	0	0	0		0	3.82
Enough space to entertain	8	5	5	4	0	0		0	3.77
Stores and restaurants within walking distance	7	7	5	1	2	2		0	3.73
Larger living space	7	7	4	2	2	2		0	3.68
Appearance of the neighborhood (Group 1)	2	4	4	1	0	0		0	3.64
Easy access to BART or other rail transit	10	4	1	4	3	3		0	3.64
Being able to use a car on the weekends and evenings (Group 2)	4	3	1	1	2	2		0	3.55
Easy access to bus or other similar public transit	8	4	4	3	3	3		0	3.50
Having my own parking space or garage	9	3	3	3	4	4		0	3.45
Living near friends or family (Group 2)	3	3	2	2	1	1		0	3.45
Variety of housing and apartment buildings in neighborhood (Group 1)	2	3	3	3	0	0		0	3.36
Having neighbors who I can relate to (Group 2)	2	3	3	2	1	1		0	3.27
Activities (e.g. Farmers market, fairs) in neighborhood (Group 1)	2	2	4	2	1	1		0	3.18
Activities and events that allow neighbors to socialize (Group 2)	3	1	4	1	2	2		0	3.18
Having my own yard (Group 2)	3	1	3	3	1	1		0	3.18
Mix of housing and apartment buildings in neighborhood (Group 2)	1	2	4	2	2	2		0	2.82
Friends or family's opinion of my home/apartment	3	2	8	5	4	4		0	2.77
Living near family (Group 1)	3	2	0	1	5	5		0	2.73
Quality of schools	7	1	2	1	11	11		0	2.64
Friends or family's opinion of my neighborhood	2	2	8	4	6	6		0	2.55
Having neighbors who are like me (Group 1)	0	2	3	1	5	5		0	2.18

Caution: This type of qualitative inquiry permits directional rather than statistical analysis.

Reaction to Listed Factors (Group #3)

For Group 3, listed factors were grouped by category and lengthened to be more specific about the particular factor. In addition, for a more precise gauge of participants' priorities, respondents were asked to rate these more specific factors on a scale of 1 to 10 (instead of 1 to 5).

However, it is possible to do some comparison to Groups #1 and #2 in terms of the most highly rated issues. Like the previous two groups, safety was the most important issue, and cost also ranked highly as a factor considered. Also, school-related factors generally ranked low, although individuals who are parents, contemplating parenthood, or conscientious of the impact of a good school district on a home's resale value provided high individual rankings.

Group 3 had earlier clarified this sentiment, with some participants mentioning that areas with good school districts were also more expensive (because such an area was highly desirable by many people). Thus, for many non-parents, it was not realistic to take that into consideration. One participant explained: "To get into those areas, it's prohibitive – so it wasn't a critical decision, [we] gave it up." Likewise, even parents in the group rated schools highly because they felt it was cheaper to be in a good public school district than to pay for private school: "[It's] only #1 on [my] list because [we have] 2 small children and don't want to fork out \$20k for private school."

The other statement that also received a high ranking was, "Even if I lived near quick and reliable public transit, I would need a car to travel where I need to go." This reflects Group 3's more car-focused emphasis (and possibly, its heavier percentage of South Bay vs. East Bay or San Francisco residents). The reasons given for needing a car included children, errands where storage space is needed or transit would be impractical (e.g. "Costco"), visitors, and the fact that transit drops off or stops running late at night.

Also, many respondents who are single felt that they could not give up their single car, although if they were in a household with more people, they may be able to own only 1 car as opposed to 2 or more.

Therefore, this group also ranked a parking spot and/or garage as fairly important, more so than the other two groups. These priorities are also reflected in the fact that Group 3 ranked freeway access higher than access to BART or other public transit. Several respondents in the group indicated they were not as familiar with all of the public transit agencies mentioned. Said one group member, "[I] don't even know what those are – [I've] heard of Caltrain but don't know [the] others."

It should be noted that for most participants in Group 3, it was not a strict car-vs-transit issue. Group 3 participants wanted convenient places to run regular errands, and they tended to associate the need for a car with the importance of minimizing the amount of time spent traveling to work and/or to perform errands. The amount of time was generally more important than the particular mode of transit. One respondent mentioned, "A lot has to do with time – when you hit traffic and it's longer, 1.5 hours becomes two to three [hours]." Another respondent said, "Bus after bus takes longer than driving."

Self-Administered Questionnaire #2
Importance of Listed Factors - Group 3

“Please rate each of the following on their importance to you in choosing where to move. Use a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means very important and 1 means not at all important. You may use any number between 1 and 10. “

	Participant #:											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mean
Neighborhood Characteristics												
Living in a neighborhood that was safe enough for people to be out and about is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	8	10	9	7	10	8	8	8	10	9	10	8.82
Living in a neighborhood where I felt safe walking home at night is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	8	8	8	7	10	8	8	8	10	9	10	8.55
Living in a clean neighborhood is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	10	6	5	8	4	8	8	8	8	10	7.27
Living in a neighborhood where it is safe and convenient to walk and bike to do my errands (i.e. gyms, grocery stores, banks, dry cleaners) is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	6	10	6	8	4	8	4	9	9	9	7.09
It is important that I can easily walk from my home to places that I like to spend time at such as restaurants, bookstores, and coffee shops.	5	8	8	7	6	5	5	8	5	10	9	6.91
Living on a quiet street is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	6	9	3	5	8	1	10	10	8	5	8	6.64
Living where there are convenient places to ride my bike, run, and walk nearby such as parks, hike and bike trails, and greenways is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	7	1	4	8	4	3	8	9	10	9	6.18
Living in a neighborhood where there are places to meet and get to know my neighbors such as bookstores, coffee shops, community centers, and schools is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	5	3	6	2	2	5	8	3	7	8	4.91
Having a back yard where I could entertain guests, or where children and pets can play, is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	10	1	5	3	3	5	5	7	6	1	4.64

	Participant #:											Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
If there were pleasant public parks nearby where my family and pets can safely play, having my own yard is less important.	5	1	8	1	3	5	1	5	5	9	8	4.64
If I could easily do errands on foot, I would be willing to own fewer cars.	5	1	10	1	5	1	3	4	1	10	9	4.55
I prefer to live in a neighborhood that offers a mix of housing types - such as single family homes, town homes, apartments.	1	3	1	2	7	1	5	3	8	7	5	3.91
Having a front yard, or space in front of my house, where I could socialize and meet neighbors is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	6	7	1	4	2	1	1	5	3	7	5	3.82
I want to live in a new neighborhood as opposed to an older neighborhood.	3	5	4	2	8	1	3	3	1	1	5	3.27
Home Characteristics												
Having ample space for private entertaining is important to me.	8	10	7	5	8	10	7	5	10	9	8	7.91
Having a dedicated parking spot is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	8	1	10	9	10	1	9	10	9	-	8	7.50
Having my own garage is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	10	7	7	1	1	3	5	10	10	8	6.09
I would rather live in a new, modern home than one with historic character.	8	5	8	5	9	1	7	3	1	5	5	5.18
If it would shorten my commute, I would live in a smaller home.	3	10	9	10	1	1	1	5	1	8	7	5.09
If it is easy to find parking in my neighborhood, I do not need my own dedicated parking space at home.	5	1	8	9	2	10	1	3	1	-	1	4.10
Financial Considerations												
Cost is one of the most important factors in deciding where to live.	10	5	10	9	10	8	9	8	8	6	9	8.36
If I found a home that met more of my criteria, I would be willing to spend more money on it.	5	10	7	8	8	1	8	5	10	5	7	6.73
Regional Access Characteristics												
I would not want to have a longer commute.	5	10	10	10	8	5	8	10	10	10	10	8.73

	Participant #:											Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Even if I lived near quick and reliable public transit, I would need a car to travel where I need to go.	10	10	7	10	7	10	9	5	10	10	8	8.73
Easy access to a freeway is important to me.	6	10	5	4	8	3	9	9	5	6	9	6.73
An easy drive to BART is important to me.	5	10	1	1	8	2	3	8	2	10	9	5.36
An easy drive to downtown San Francisco is important to me.	7	10	10	1	1	1	5	8	6	1	7	5.18
An easy walk, taxi, or transit ride to downtown San Francisco is important to me.	7	1	10	1	10	1	3	4	4	9	7	5.18
If public transit were more convenient, my household would own fewer cars.	5	1	10	1	5	1	3	5	1	10	10	4.73
Easy access to transit (bus, casual carpool, MUNI) is important to me.	7	2	10	1	1	1	3	7	6	3	9	4.55
An easy walk to BART is important to me.	7	2	1	1	2	2	1	8	2	10	9	4.09
Easy access to commuter rail (Caltrain, ACE, Capital Corridor) is important to me.	6	2	1	1	1	1	8	8	1	3	9	3.73
Easy access from my home to a commuter rail system (such as Caltrain, Capital Corridor, San Joaquin's, and ACE) is important to me.	6	1	1	1	1	1	8	5	1	3	8	3.27
Lifestyles and Beliefs												
Living in a certified "green building" is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	5	1	5	2	1	2	3	4	6	6	5	3.64
Schools												
Living in a school district that provides a good education is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	3	10	1	1	3	1	2	5	8	1	8	3.91
Being able to safely walk to schools is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	3	5	1	3	3	1	2	5	9	1	5	3.45

Caution: This type of qualitative inquiry permits directional rather than statistical analysis.

Trade-Offs (Group #3 Only)

In this exercise, Group 3 was asked to rank a series of statements about a particular factor in moving – safety, a clean neighborhood, etc. – and to consider whether particular tradeoffs would be considered.

In some cases, participants seemed to have some difficulty applying these abstract tradeoffs to their real-world moving decisions. One respondent stated, “They are horrible to answer – don’t want to deal with either one of those issues, they’re both horrible things to try and decide; I was torn, put 2 in both; [I] don’t want to have to drive to be safe.”

However, this does not mean participants could not discuss the tradeoffs they made. In actuality, Group 3 participants (and even respondents in earlier groups) did discuss the tradeoffs they made, at length, in their own personal decisions to move. Common tradeoffs included: smaller space or less well-maintained neighborhood for a shorter commute/easier time running errands; for parents, a longer commute in exchange for a better school district; and sacrificing some sense of peace and quiet or a back yard in exchange for proximity to key transit points (e.g. freeway access, bus stop, BART station).

Group 3 members were quite clear about what tradeoffs they did actually make. For example, one respondent explained, “. . . cleanliness is not something I want to be in traffic for, and . . . safety was the thing, not how clean the neighborhood was.” Another participant responded, “In Potrero Hill, people would pee, barf, do drugs, so for me it was coming home to this ‘ick’, so I would definitely drive more to get away from that.” The more participants could directly discuss what they did, the easier it was for them to clearly state the tradeoffs they considered and actually made. These statements were made both during the specific discussion about tradeoffs and throughout the move-related discussions in general.

Group 3’s response to tradeoffs also raised a key (heretofore unmentioned) tradeoff – that is, the option of waiting, or continuing to look for a particular scenario, as opposed to accepting more of a compromise and going forward with the move. For some participants, they did not have this option, since they were coming to the Bay Area from out of town. Explained one local participant, “The time thing is crucial – [you] have to be patient, but [referring to another respondent] coming 400 miles you don’t have a lot of time; for me, I wasn’t coming from far away, I could be patient.” Another local participant stated, “. . . there are things I can’t compromise on, I’d just wait.” Another participant, who had made a long-distance move to the Bay Area and was now planning to move again, within the area, explained, “[I] like the area, but don’t like [the] specific apartment complex – [I’m] moving again . . .” Having the option of waiting, or continuing to look, is clearly an important trade-off for movers.

Self-Administered Questionnaire #3**Importance of Listed Factors - Group #3**

“Listed below are different ways to phrase some of the statements you just rated. As you did on the previous questionnaire, please rate each of the following on their importance to you in choosing where to move. Use a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means very important and 1 means not at all important. You may use any number between 1 and 10.”

Safety	Mean
2. Living in a neighborhood where I felt safe walking home at night is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	8.09
2c. (Alternate). I would be willing to pay more for a home or apartment if I could live in a neighborhood where I felt safe walking home at night.	6.55
2b. (Alternate). I would be willing to live in a smaller home or apartment if I could live in a neighborhood where I felt safe walking home at night.	5.73
2a. (Alternate). I would be willing to have a longer commute if I could live in a neighborhood where I felt safe walking home at night.	4.64
Clean Neighborhood	Mean
6. Living in a clean neighborhood is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	7.00
6c. (Alternate). I would be willing to pay more for a home or apartment if I could live in a clean neighborhood.	5.36
6b. (Alternate). I would be willing to live in a smaller home or apartment if I could live in a clean neighborhood.	4.73
6a. (Alternate). I would be willing to have a longer commute if I could live in a clean neighborhood.	4.00
Places to Meet and Get to Know Neighbors	Mean
11. Living in a neighborhood where there are places to meet and get to know my neighbors such as bookstores, coffee shops, community centers, and schools is one of the most important factors in deciding where to move.	4.91
11c. (Alternate). I would be willing to pay more for a home or apartment if I could live in a neighborhood where there are places to meet and get to know my neighbors such as bookstores, coffee shops, community centers, and schools.	3.82

11b. (Alternate). I would be willing to live in a smaller home or apartment if I could live in a neighborhood where there are places to meet and get to know my neighbors such bookstores, coffee shops, community centers, and schools.	3.45
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11a. (Alternate). I would be willing to have a longer commute if I could live in a neighborhood where there are places to meet and get to know my neighbors such bookstores, coffee shops, community centers, and schools.	2.18
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Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) (Groups #1 and #2 Only)

Both Group 1 and Group 2 participants read the Transit-Oriented Development description (see next page) and were asked for their reactions.

Many participants in both groups did not view the advertised community favorably. While Group 1 participants used words like “cookie cutter,” “boring,” and “homogenous,” Group 2 participants felt the community might be suitable for other people – just not them. Said one Group 2 participant: “It’s not family-friendly. Turn the clock back 10-15 years and it’s what I would have looked for.” Other participants in Group 2 said things like, “That’s for very old and very young people,” or “A good entrance level purchase, perhaps.” One Group 2 participant summed it up: “I’d be happy it’s there, but it’s not for me.”

Group 1 participants were particularly concerned about the sterile nature of such a development. “It would be better if the community was grown organically – as opposed to, ‘Build a cute restaurant here, and it’s going to be cute because we’re going to make it pretty,’ ” explained one respondent.

Awareness of Green and Transit Developments Used As a Gauge

Participants of both groups were wary of “green” building claims. Both groups felt that ‘green’ had been used in so many marketing campaigns, not always honestly, and wanted specific details that would tell them exactly how ‘green’ this development truly was. Said one Group 1 participant: “I’m not a remodeler. If it says green, I want to know, is it solar power? How is it heated? What kind of new, safe things are they doing? Recycling materials?”

Desirable ‘green’ qualities mentioned included:

- The use of recycled materials and/or sustainable materials in building the development.
- Strong encouragement of public transit use and walking, so residents could live with fewer/no cars.
- Recycling centers on-site
- Composting facilities
- Energy-efficient appliances, heating, lighting, and plumbing

Some of the skepticism and questioning came from participants’ own knowledge of existing transit-oriented and ‘green’ developments.

- Communities mentioned as being transit-oriented included Santana Row in San Jose, 250 King Street in San Francisco, “south of Market lofts” in San Francisco, and Jack London Square in Oakland.
- Participants often used their existing knowledge of both transit and transit-oriented developments to judge this particular description.
 - The list of locations was questioned by some participants in both groups, as they did not perceive all of those locations as having sufficient transit options to support a transit-oriented development. Explained, one, “Richmond, Vallejo, Santa Rosa – not seeing it, there’s really not public transportation access [there].” Another participant said, “I see it fitting in SF – if I were thinking about living in any of the surrounding communities, I wouldn’t see it, other than maybe Jack London Square.”
 - Participants also questioned whether other pieces were in place as well. “People are pretty savvy. I’ve seen these terms [green, transit-oriented] used to market places, and it’s just built around a BART station and used this to sell them.” They saw being near transit as merely one piece of a truly

transit-oriented development, and questioned whether the shops and entertainment were close by as well, or whether other transit existed for non-work related trips.

- Overall, participants were wary of hearing the words 'transit-oriented development' and/or 'green' used more as buzzwords than accurate descriptors of a particular project. One participant explained she was aware of a such a development, but it was not delivering the 'green' benefits originally advertised: "It's got a lot of these ideas, but it's right off the freeway, which is one of the biggest distractions – maybe it was built with recycled materials, but since it's by the freeway, they're [residents are] still getting on the freeway."

When asked whether green building was a priority, participants in both groups mostly indicated that it was not – but would be a plus to have. Group 1 participants were somewhat more willing to make it a priority, but only after being reassured that the development was truly green and truly transit-oriented. "We would sacrifice location and other top things for someplace that was actually, TRULY green community," explained one participant. Group 2 participants were not as willing to consider it: "It's there [green building as a priority], nice to have, but lower on my list [than top 3 priorities previously stated]."

New Places, New Choices

"Now available for sale or rent in the San Francisco Bay Area: Attractive, affordable homes with modern amenities in vibrant neighborhoods. All units offer excellent public transit access for gridlock-free commutes to employment centers. Convenience is key, with shops, restaurants and retail services just steps away, and walking and biking opportunities galore. Autos are optional, and any savings in gasoline, parking, maintenance and insurance costs are yours to keep. Experience the benefits of a transit-oriented lifestyle at one of the exciting new developments taking shape in Redwood City, San Jose, Pleasant Hill, Jack London Square in Oakland, Richmond, San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Vallejo, Hayward, the San Pablo Avenue Corridor in the East Bay... and in many other locations throughout the region. Come see if this new style of living is the right choice for you."

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Respondents will need to be reminded to consider the factors important to them *at the time of the move*, rather than now. Participants in all three groups were able to recall these factors clearly. There may need to be some way to clarify which move is being discussed if survey respondents have made more than one move in the time period, or if they have made one move recently and are planning another.

Primary reasons for a move are often related to another member of the household (e.g. many men said safety was important to their spouse or family). Respondents did seem to understand that the factors listed could apply to either themselves or to other members of the household. However, the wording of the statements on the survey should be broad enough to include other household members where applicable. This can also be emphasized in the interviewer training sessions.

The word “environment” was interpreted very broadly in all three groups, taken to mean anything from personal safety and health, to neighbors, buildings in the neighborhood, amenities, etc. If survey questions discuss environmental impact issues, they must clearly define what ‘environment’ or ‘environmental’ refers to.